

C0DA

by Michael Kirkbride



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I. My name is Jubal-lun-Sul

Ald Sotha Below, 5E911

House Sul Progenitor House, duly noted under the digital house,
Whirling School Prefect Approved

Chronocule Delivery: souljewel count: 78888-00-00-00-000

My name is Jubal-lun-Sul, of House Sul, whose name is known and heard throughout the Scathing Bay and the Nine times Nine Thrones. Our lord is High Alma Jaroon, of House Jaroon, whose city is the First City of the New North, where all who Went Under from Landfall settled and made peace with the Worm, when we were not Eighty and One separate peoples but One, carrying the tibrols on our backs together and cutting tunnels by the light and heat that all mer wore, with equal dust in every mouth. My family's name comes from the first child born in the Velothiid, Haeko-dol-Sul, and, like him, we are salt merchants. Our crest is the tusk of the bat-tiger. Our bloodline is registered by C0DA.

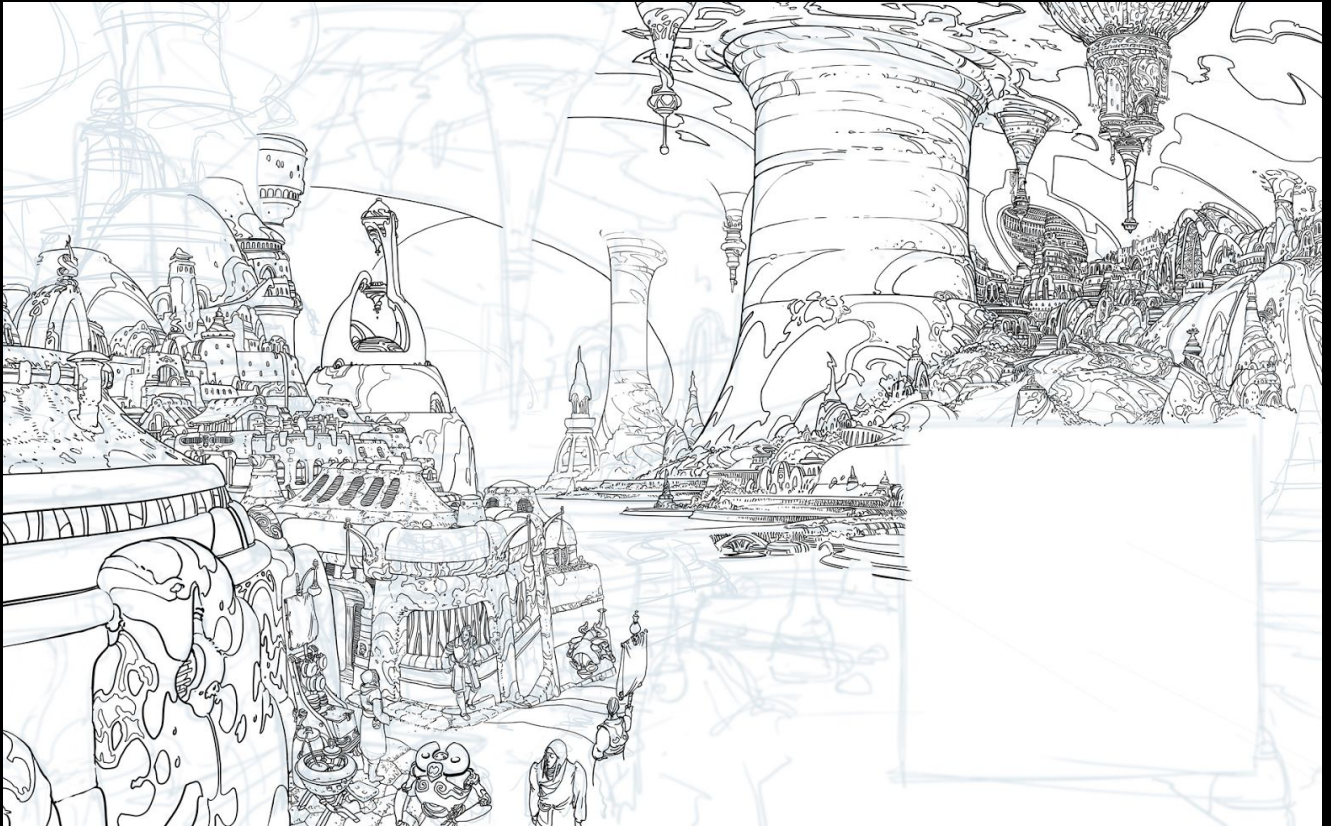
The Digitals say we come from another star, but so many have forgotten. I have not, for my lineage granted me audience with Memory, and I have spoken with the Wheels of Lull. I have seen proof, as any who come Up during Landfall Season, when the winds die down enough Above that all may make pilgrimage under the banner of Vehk and Vehk. Though many Above have renounced Memory, they too remember.

II. The Velothiid

Present day. Velothiid.

TEM designate: MORROWIND 2.

Whirling School Prefect Approved



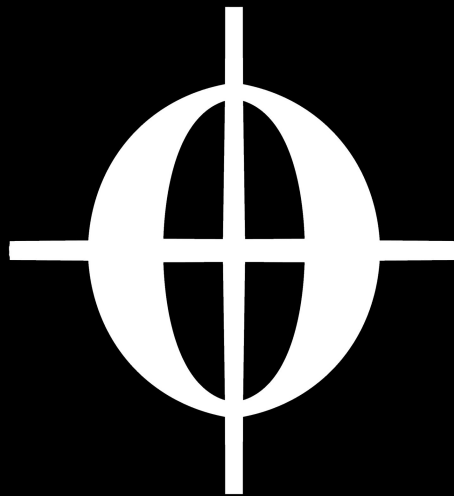
VELOTHIID. We're beneath the surface of the moon, in a connected series of mighty caverns. A great city sprawls across it all — ghettos cut into the rock, marketplaces gathered by every silvery lake, quartz-and-ruby temples rising up and out to protect the various tunnels that lead into and out of the caverns. Color washes up everywhere: red lamps, cultivated farms of glowing lichen and moss, and the signal lights of drifting sload-bag transports and vigilant wasp-riders. Throngs of hooded citizens huddle everywhere, occasionally holding up the palanquins of silk-laden merchants. Mechanical servitors float about, their torsos



leaving trails of blue-white mathematical symbols. This civilization stretches even across the ceilings, with gigantic stalactites serving as the houses of the nobility, dotted with lit windows and crest-banners, sporting pictures of strange beasts and Daedric scripture.

HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. “DAY”. *On one of the stalactite manors, a larger one, sporting the crest-banner of a curved tusk. This is the House of Sul, and home to our protagonist. A lone figure watches the city below him from atop a balcony terrace.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: My family has seen better days. I aim to reclaim them.



JUBAL-LUN-SUL, a noble of thirty-some years, draped in a kimono adorned with stylized bat-tigers, his long grey hair unbraided. A small torch floats close to him. There is an archway on the terrace that leads to a dimly-lit room.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: That’s a lie. I want more than just that. I want a very great thing for the whole of my people. Call it a messiah complex, if you must. I wouldn’t unless you were recognized under C0DA, at least not out loud, but in all honesty I probably deserve it. But, then, salt merchants are given to them. It’s in our blood.

JUBAL and his torch walk by inside, through an “observatory” — really, a hall whose centerpiece is an orrery made of brass and jewel-wrought wire, its planets numbering 16.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: After all, the only thing that stopped the Worm was salt. They have an especial vulnerability to it. At least, they used to, but they adapt. But, then, the Worm always adapts. It’s in their agenda.

HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR, EAST OBSERVATORY. *Various scrying-mirrors line the room, their magic barely registering faded views of the tunnels that surround the city. Reaching from the ceiling are multi-jointed “telescopes” that we can assume lead up and out onto the lunar surface.*



JUBAL-LUN-SUL: They made these tunnels at first. Then we got here and did the rest. But we're not supposed to be here at all. At least that's what I keep telling myself. See, the thing about the Worm is that they can't go Up. But we can. We do. Make that: some of us do, the ones that are allowed.

JUBAL stands before one the mirrors, lost in thought. Nearly indiscernible is a massive tunnel, a red lamp illuminating only a small portion of it.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Everyone is allowed during **every** Landfall Season. Most of us decide not to, since it's more dangerous Up there than it is down here. But I **had** to go. I come from a very, very old family. The oldest families. The **progenitors**. One with **bells on**, too, I might add. The "first child born Under" and all of that. In other words, we've got **history**. If I hadn't gone? The Digitals would've stuck their fingers into things. No one wants that. No one. That's probably why I have waited so long to have a child of my own.



III. Pilgrimage

Sanctioned Pilgrimage Tunnel, 5E892

88th Landfall

Worm Threat in Vicinity: Null.

Tonal Architecture set to Theme: Operatic: Lullaby

Whirling School Prefect Approved

VELOTHIID WORM TUNNEL. TIME INDETERMINATE. *A worm tunnel, vast, its walls and floors riddled with "safety holes" for people to jump into if a Worm approaches. Three small figures are seen in the distance, two dunmeri males, one holding a red lamp, and a floating servitor.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: No child should have to see what's really Up there.

We can see the figures now: a younger JUBAL, dressed for topside in robes, bonemold breastplate, goggles, open-faced helm. He holds the lamp, a long pole with a neon-red grub squirming on the end. The other dunmer is HLAALU HIR, similarly dressed, but his armor shows all the signs of money: amber lacquered edges, badges of station, a small front cape with the crest of his House: a set of scales. The servitor is an ancient model: a grinning death's head of gold and lapis-lazuli eyes, and a vestigial spinal cord drawing a line in the dust of the tunnel floor.





HLAALU HIR: Just a bit more ore, Jubal, don't worry. Keep your lamp up.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: What for, muthsera? The Alma said the Worm wouldn't interfere, Hlaalu Hir.

HLAALU HIR: Don't be so formal. Anyways, it's more like it can't. I'm not worried about them. And the lamps are for two things. Us to see and the tunnel racers to stay away. They don't like the red.

They're closer now, and caught in the red light of their lamp. JUBAL looks sheepish or sick; HIR is smiling.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I don't like it, either. My head. It's swimming. Should I go second brain?

HLAALU HIR: Your boat, Jubal, you float it. I wouldn't, not this close to the surface. Lunar interference and all. Wouldn't want secondary visions.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: What?

SERVITOR: QUIET/ET/ET/ET. OPEN/EN/EN/EN. MEMORY SERVES. MEMORY CLOSE/OSE/OSE/OSE.

Closer. Parts of the tunnel have switchboards embedded into them. The SERVITOR is scanning them. JUBAL and HLAALU are wrapping their faces in breather scarves.

HLAALU HIR: We're here. Tokbox, ready the hatch. And stop clicking, it's annoying. Ready, Jubal?

SERVITOR: CAN'T HELP IT/IT/IT. WATCHMAKER ABOVE. ON. THE. CLOCK.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: My fear was/is illusory. (Why am I talking like this?) Ready, muthsera, open the hatch. (No wonder the rest never come.) Let me see.



IV. The Wheels of Lull

The Wheel As IS.

TEM designate: NIRN.



LUNAR LANDSCAPE. *They've left the tunnel and walked out onto the surface, dunes of red, sugary sand leading as far as the eye can see. JUBAL and HIR stare into the sky. It is a vision of apocalypse. A smaller, silver moon sits to the upper left, orbiting a shattered planet. The planet Nirn. "Earth." Cracked open like an asteroid field still held into spherical shape by forces unknown. The right side of the planet moves from rock and fire to ghostly cosmic clockworks. The planet has a "skeleton" inside it, an interlocking system of gears and pistons and wheels, half-here, half-not, overlaid with a nebula of mathematical equations that we can't understand.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Is ...?

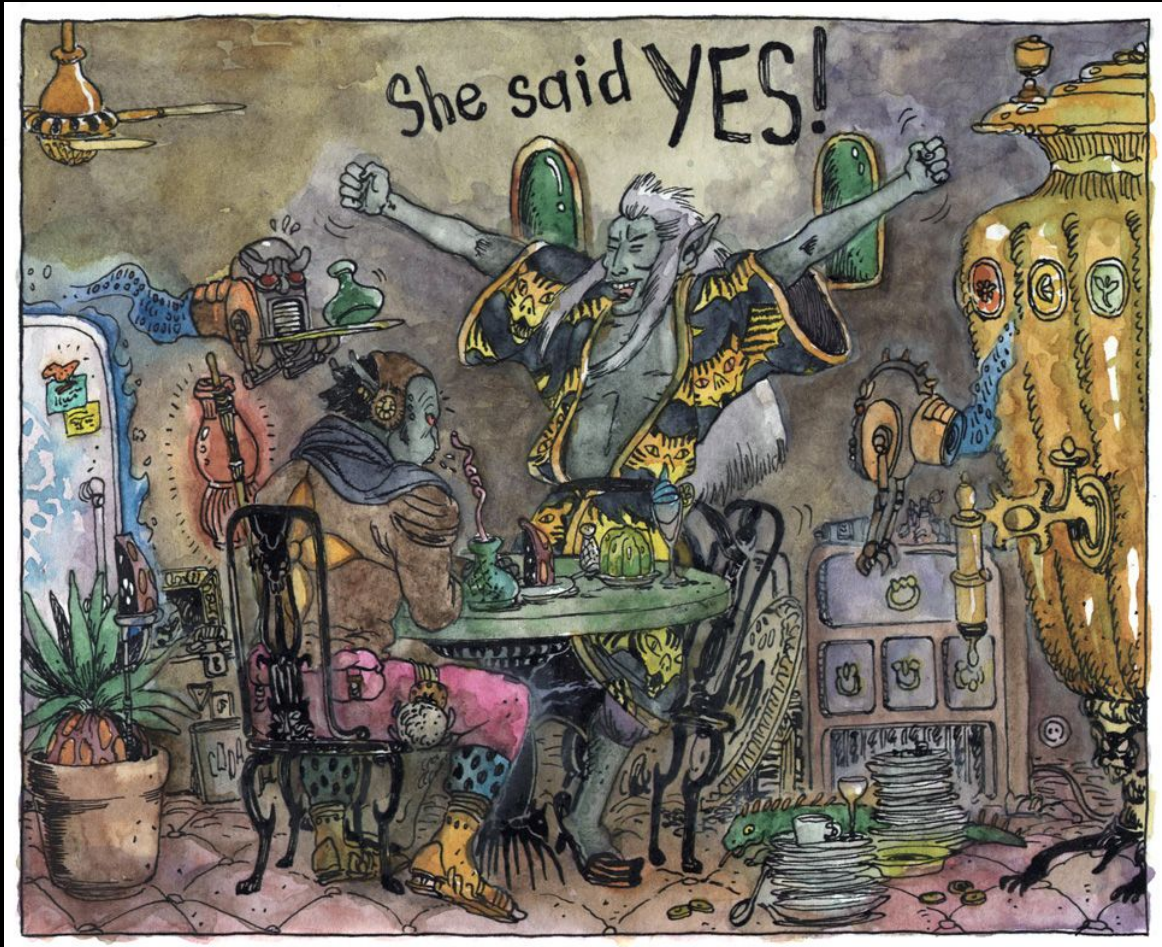
HLAALU HIR: Yeah, it is. Pretty, right? The Wheels of Lull, the other star, et cetera and all that, Nirn, where we came from. Take a good look because we're not coming back.

SERVITOR: CLOCK.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: And I'm supposed to ask it a question?

V. She said Yes!

Ald Sotha. Under-Manor of House Sul. Now.



HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. "DAY". *Back in one of the great halls of House Sul, present day. JUBAL and HIR are talking, walking towards a nearby tea room. They are dressed in vaguely military-like garb.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: She said ...

HLAALU HIR: Jubal, my velocipede is already vibrating. I have to be somewhere and it knows it. The labor unions have become worse than the mirror logicians used to be. Want this, get that, but hey, look, then this will happen. 'New North', my ass. You know the deal, so just tell me what she said.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Hir, listen. She said 'yes'. She's agreed to marry me.

HLAALU HIR: Wait...

HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. TEA ROOM. *As servitors bring tea from a larger Samovar servitor, JUBAL turns around, his excitement now unchecked.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: SHE SAID YES!!

HLAALU HIR: ...?

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: SHE SAID YES!!

HLAALU HIR: This is the part where I'm supposed to hug —

JUBAL bear hugs his friend as tea-holding servitors float nearby trying not to look awkward.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: SHE SAID YES!!

HLAALU HIR: Three times makes it real, brother. Congratulations! But what business does a salt merchant's son have to offer the High Alma —

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: THERE'S A BUT!

HLAALU HIR: Called it.

They both finally take their tea. JUBAL's smile is almost unbearable.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Hir, House Sul marries into House Jaroon!

HLAALU HIR: I love you, Jubal, but castes are castes. Your family isn't a warrior designate, it's, well, it's salt. So I'm guessing —

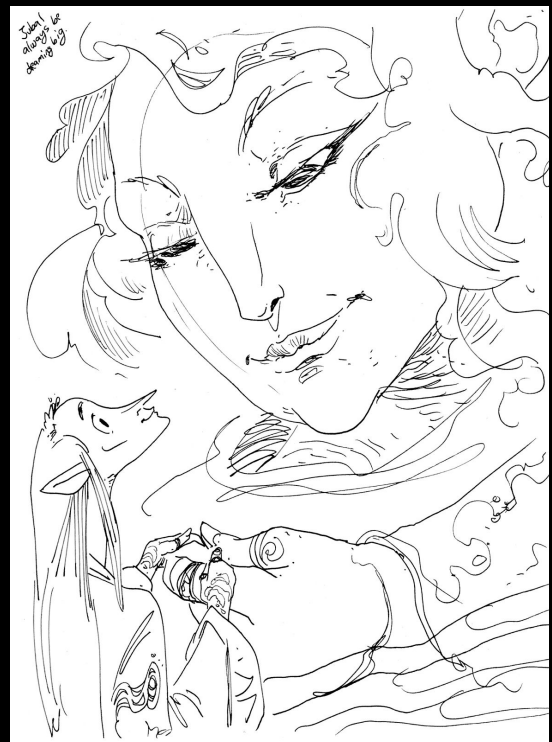
JUBAL takes a seat at a giant table. Behind it falls the crest-banner of the the Tusk of the Bat-Tiger.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Yes, I must hunt something to prove my name!

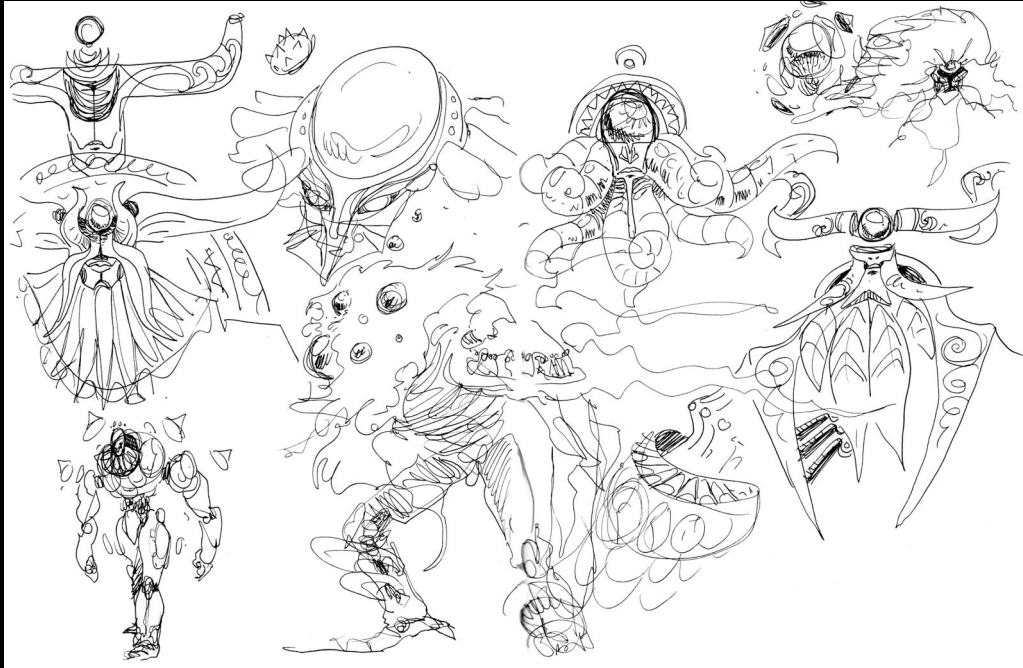
HLAALU HIR: You're too excited, and I'm really sorry. But this is Sacrifice Season, Jubal. She's making you kill the Worm, isn't she?

HIR has seated himself as well. The two friends talk to each across a ridiculous distance.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: What? No! My family already took care of them! That's partly why she said yes! It's all about what Memory picked me for! I must hunt and kill a Numidium!



VI. That's never gone wrong



The red sands of the moon. The wreckage of Nirn is eclipsed by the towering Numidium, a robot made of brass spikes, from head to toe, doing battle with the tiny various gods and heroes that oppose it. Some fly on strange beasts, some fly of their own accord, some use beam-weapons from a bygone age, others blast magic from their hands, eyes, or chests. The NUMIDIUM is winning this battle, though. Easily. This should be obvious by all of the smoldering bodies that litter the area near its flaming feet.



HLAALU HIR: Is that all? **That's never gone wrong.**

VII. I think I need a cat

Ald Sotha. The Corner Club. After the Audience.

ALD SOTHA. CORNER CLUB. "DAY". [...] *One of the bad parts of town. The buildings here are in disarray, some of them with upper floors that lean dangerously to the side. Beggars and nix-hounds play in the trash. In the center of it all is a mead hall or gentlemen's club of ill-repute.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I think I need a cat, Hir.

HLAALU HIR: Seriously? Is this a bat-tiger thing?

At least it's clean inside. Nobles rub shoulders with tunnel-scavengers. Servitors and demons bring drinks and scrib-meat platters to anyone that asks. There is a dead body sitting alone in a booth that everyone just ignores. JUBAL and HIR are seated at the best of the tables, their food somewhat better, with candles. A small statuette of a forgotten Khajiiti warrior is bolted into the center of the table, holding up a small bell.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: No. Don't bring my banner into this. Bat-tigers are —

HLAALU HIR: People see different things Upside. Let's do another round, maybe. Fuck the cats.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Muthsera, they were here before we were. I need one of them. You own this Corner Club, so you know which kind I'm talking about.

HIR taps the statuette's bell with a spoon.

HLAALU HIR: Fine. Okay. Fair enough. Speaking of secondary visions.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Just do it, Hir. Tell their khaj I will pay.

HLAALU HIR: On the house this time around. You got a fear of needles?

A skinny khajiit approaches their table, carrying a large bag.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: ... Yes.

HLAALU HIR: Figured. Pipe it is, then.

VIII. Take it slow

VELOTHIID WORM TUNNEL. TIME INDETERMINATE. *A worm tunnel. Different than before. JUBAL and HIR, dressed in rags, in a circle of red lamps.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Is this tunnel sanctioned?

HLAALU HIR: Nope. You think I'm stupid, Jubal?

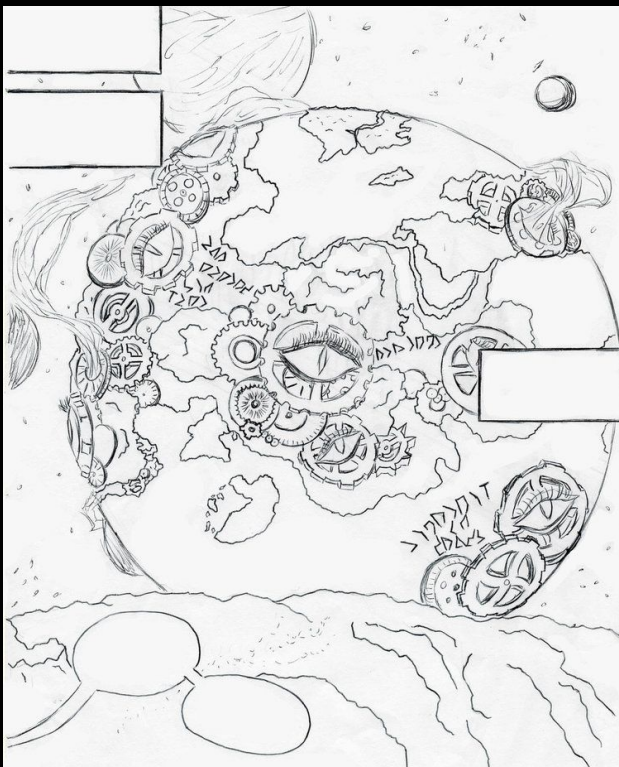
JUBAL lights a long skooma-pipe and inhales.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Not at all. ... FNFFF ... I think you're my friend.

HLAALU HIR: Nice. Take it slow. Let it hit when it wants to and not before. If you rush skooma —

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: — “Bad moons in a big dream.” I get it. Just.

JUBAL exhales and holds a hand out toward a wall. His eyes are filled with dreams. His nose is bleeding.



JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Just ... Just.
No wonder they click.

A small drop of blood falls onto JUBAL's steadied hand.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Just watch out for me.

MOONSIDE. The ghostly wheels inside the dead planet. The gears have eyes in them. Women's eyes. Women's eyes with slits for irises.

Watch. The Clock. It's ticking.
Always always ticking.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: No. It's clicking ... Easy enough to mistake.

IX. The Digitals say ...

Ald Sotha Below

Marketplace 44. Now.

Whirling School Prefect Approved

ALD SOTHA MARKETPLACE 44. "DAY". A sprawling, multi-leveled market, similar in style to the Hanging Gardens. JUBAL and HIR are wearing their robes of nobility. It makes most of the other dunmer scatter out of their way. Hundreds of dunmer are here, merchants, thieves, along with bull netch crime bosses with servitor heads attached on so they can communicate. Encampments of khajiit shushing scamps away.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Impressive.

HLAALU HIR: "The groom shall not condescend."

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: What? I wasn't. I've just never been here.

HLAALU HIR: Me, neither. Outpost of my family's holdings, off the books. But if you're going through with this —

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Do the Digitals know?

All the merchants have ducked behind their stands. A large ghostly finger points towards JUBAL and HIR [...]

HLAALU HIR: Naturally. Speaking of which.

DIGITAL FINGER 1: REGISTERED
BY CODA.

[...] Two fingers invade [...] accusatory, pointing at Jubal. The throngs of the marketplace are either bowing or fleeing the scene.

HLAALU HIR: Just act casual.

DIGITAL FINGER 2:
JUBAL-LUN-SUL OF HOUSE SUL.

HLAALU HIR: If they start playing instruments, don't worry. They love music. Even if it sounds different to you than it does to —



DIGITAL FINGER 1: I STARE WITH EACH NEW WINDOW. STRIDE-HEAT OF THE MARKET. THIS IS GOD'S CITY, DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS.

JUBAL moves forward, towards the fingers, moving through the throngs that have prostrated themselves.

HLAALU HIR: ...and sometimes they just get things out of order.

HIR isn't getting closer. A harsh golden glow begins to overtake the left side of the panel. JUBAL takes no notice. Instead, he points towards us.

DIGITAL FINGER 1: WE DO NOT SING TO YOU, SON HLAALU. WE SING TO HIM.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Okay, then, but just keep it down. You're scaring all of them. You're really noisy.

The golden glow is brighter and JUBAL closer. HIR cups his hands over his mouth, trying to get his friend's attention.

DIGITAL FINGER 1: THE GROOM SHALL NOT CONDESCEND.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: He's not. He's shopping.

HLAALU HIR: Um, Jubal. Eyes sideways.

DIGITAL FINGER 2: ALL LANGUAGE IS BASED ON MEAT. DO NOT LET THE SOPHISTS FOOL YOU.

The golden glow is only brighter. JUBAL holds his hands out and to the side, indicating the rest of the marketplace and its people.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I know my scripture, spooky finger ghosts. Move along now and let these people do their thing here. It's a marketplace, for God's sake.

HLAALU HIR: I'm serious, Jubal. They're not scared of the Digitals. They're —

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Now shush, all of you! There's no need to bow or prostrate yourselves. There are no castes here! At least not today. ... Get up! All of you! I'm just looking to buy a weapon!

VIVEC in all his glory, inside a golden sun. His body is half-blue and half-gold, his head is set aflame. In one hand he carries Muatra, his spear. In the other he carries a small shield made of bug-shell. He floats in mid-air in the lotus position. [...]

VIVEC: Maybe I can help.



X. A special child

Veloeth. Tamriel. Nirn. Starry Heart.

TEM designate: MORROWIND (0).

Era Erased.

Whirling School Prefect Approved

VELOETH. DAY. *A bright, blue day full of sunshine. There's a volcano in the distance, dormant. A small chimeri boy-child of golden skin looks that way, his hand on the head of a sleeping nix-hound.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: At this point, I should probably explain who that was. He was a child of my people back on our old planet. A special child. He saw things differently than most.

RED MOUNTAIN. *The boy VIVEC and three friends, two more boys and a girl, all golden-skinned, are sneaking through one of the volcano's cavernous tunnels. Lava in places. Of course. They're kids. They don't care.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: His name was Vivec. He and some of his friends found a special cave. His friends' names were Sotha Sil, Almalexia, and Nerevar.

The boy VIVEC has broken apart what looks to be a heart-shaped stone. He's giving portions of it to the others, whose skins are taking on a blue hue. They seem more afraid of this than he is.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Inside that cave, they found a special stone and that gave them powers. Then they returned to their respective houses. They thought they could hide what they found.

Ridiculous picture of the boy VIVEC holding his portion of the stone above his head as he grows into the size of a giant! He has now become half gold, half blue.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Well, his friends did. But Vivec knew his country was plagued by demons. So he —

VIVEC: GIANT-FORM VIVEC!

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: — well, he used his powers to chase the demons away.



XI. Land of the Indoril

Veloth. Tamriel. Nirn. Starry Heart.

TEM designate: MORROWIND (1).

Era Erased.

Whirling School Prefect Approved



VELOTH. MOURNHOLD. THE DOCKS. DAY. *A gray, dusty day full of falling ashes. A teenage VIVEC, golden if he wasn't so dirty, homeless, fierce, huddles with others of his kind next to the docks.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: The real problem is which story really does him justice. Especially when they all do.

VIVEC and the others look up as soldiers of House Indoril march by, golden masks on, feathered plumes, kicking up more dust.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Vivec was the leader of a teenage gang of gutter-snipes. They'd do almost anything for money. Kill, steal, whore themselves out. They were catamites with a grudge and a skill set to focus it.

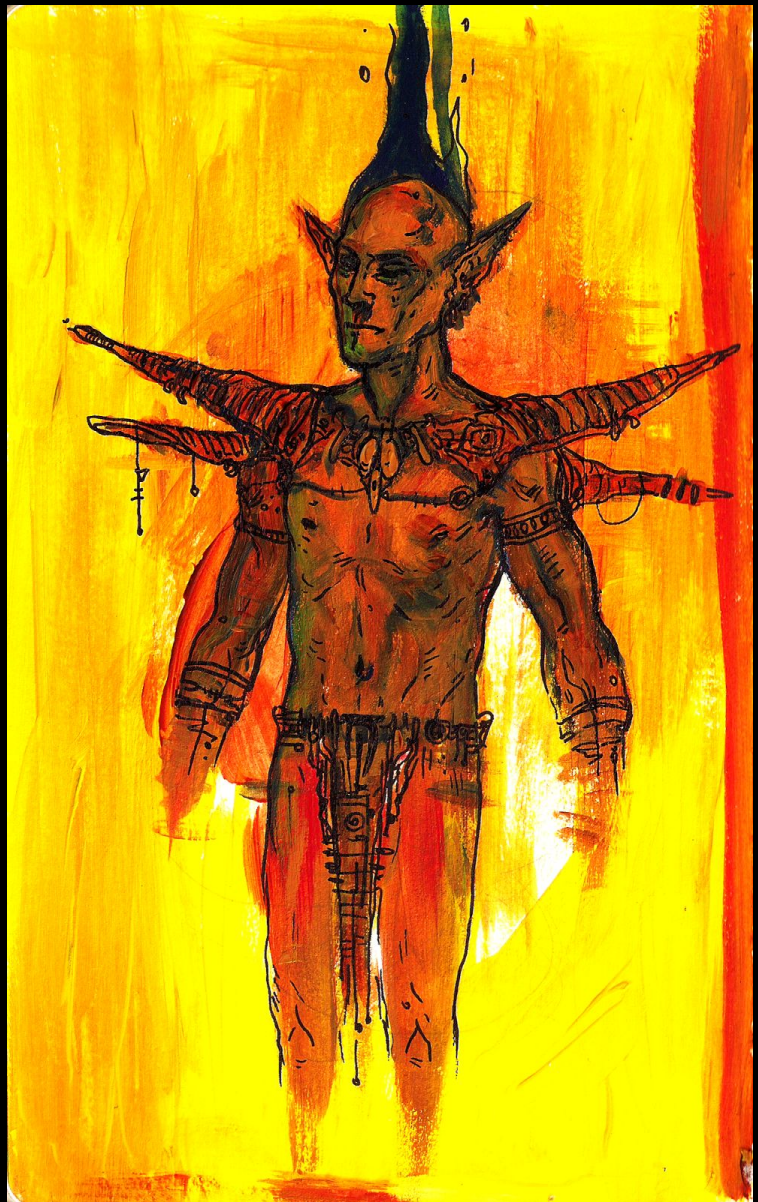
One of the soldiers, bearing a badge of rank, looks down at VIVEC and cocks his

head. We can see they're talking. We can also tell that VIVEC is almost close to spitting onto the soldier's mask.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Then one day, Vivec spoke to a soldier that saw something inside him. Something special. This soldier called himself Nerevar, of House Indoril. (They're not around anymore. This is an old story.)

VELOTH. MOURNHOLD. DAY. An older VIVEC, now dressed as a soldier himself, but no helmet. Instead he sports a mohawk and, holding a spear that he's cobbled together, faces down an approaching army of ash monsters.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: House Indoril was collecting an army to chase the demons out of their lands. Vivec became one of their generals, but still refused to take their House name. He fought so well that eventually he became a god, so no one thought it wise to mention the above might be an insult.



XII. Pulse Plaza

Veloth. Tamriel. Nirn. Starry Heart.

TEM designate: TOMORROWIND.

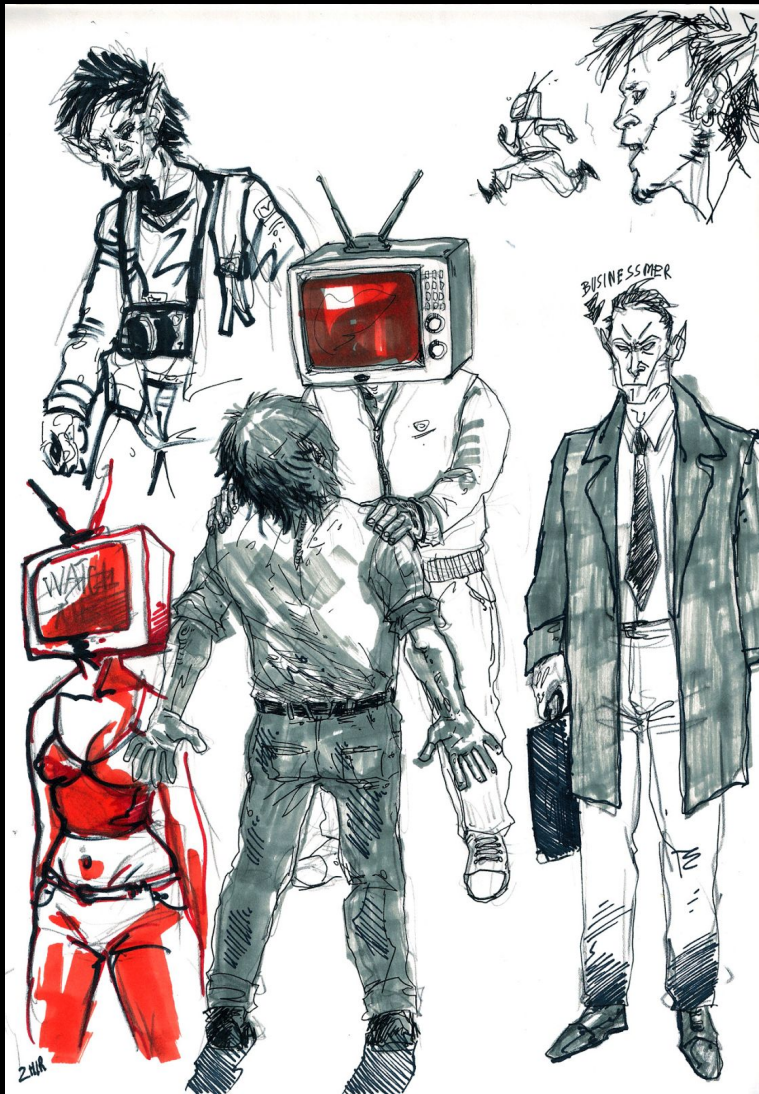
Era Erased.

Whirling School Prefect Approved



TOMORROWIND. PULSE PLAZA. MORNING. [...] [P]eople running around in a crowded chaos in the Neo-Victorian Tomorrowwind version of Times Square. More than half of the people have TELEVISION SETS for heads, and these are chasing the others. The TELEVISION SET HEADS are only unified in their strange, replaced heads; otherwise, they are people from all walks of life: businessmer, construction workers, tourists of all stripes and races, vagrants. [...]

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: But let's just go with my favorite. Every kid born in the Velothiid knows this version. I mean, it's free on dreamsleeve streaming.



TELEVISION SET HEAD ONE:
WATCH. *(beat)* ME.

CITIZEN ONE: GAAAAHHH!

TELEVISION SET HEAD TWO:
WIDEST. SELECTION.
LOWEST. PRICES. BEST.
QUALITY.

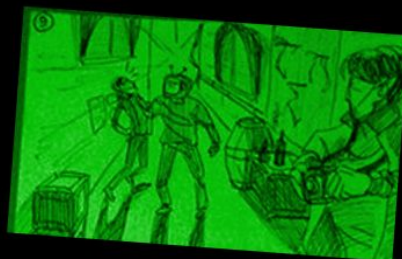
TELEVISION SET HEAD THREE:
FOLLOWING. THE. BREAK.

CITIZEN TWO:
SOMEBODY HELP ME!

CITIZEN THREE: GET OUT OF
MY WAAAAY!

TELEVISION SET HEAD FOUR:
COMING. UP. NEXT!

CLOSER near the edge of Pulse Plaza, ALANDRO SUL [...] is running from a TELEVISION SET HEAD. ALANDRO has a camera around his neck and a signal watch around his left wrist, the source of the SOUND FX.



TELEVISION SET HEAD: LIQUIDATION!

ALANDRO SUL: ALANDRO SUL TO THE BIG V! COME IN COME IN COME IN!

ALANDRO ducks into a nearby alleyway, the TELEVISION SET HEAD close behind. A frightened skooma-junky in the foreground notices them both approaching.

ALANDRO SUL: START RUNNING, BUDDY!

TELEVISION SET HEAD: EVERYTHING.

The junky is too slow. The TELEVISION SET HEAD grabs him as ALANDRO turns around raising his camera for a shot. The TELEVISION SET HEAD forces the junky to look into its screen-face.

TELEVISION SET HEAD: EVERYTHING. MUST.

POV of ALANDRO's camera, as the junky's head turns into a television.

TELEVISION SET HEAD: EVERYTHING. MUST. GO.

SOUND FX: **SNAP! ZYT ZYT ZYT.**

POV of ALANDRO's camera, as the TWO TELEVISION SET HEADS stalk towards him — each speaking together [...]



TELEVISION SET HEADS: THAT. TINGLE. TELLS. YOU. IT'S. WORKING.

ALANDRO lowering his camera, eyes wide.

ALANDRO SUL: AWW, NUTS.

TELEVISION SET HEADS: SWEEPING. THE. NATION.

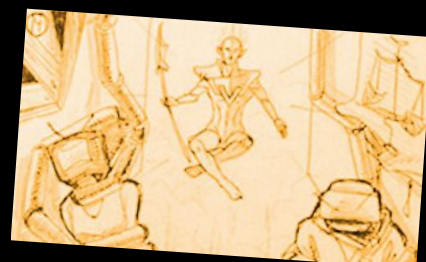


SOUND FX: **ZYT ZYT ZYT.**

In a blur, the two TELEVISION SET HEADS are entangled in metal pipes from the alleyway walls. VIVEC hovers between them, smiling down at ALANDRO. Dust settles to the ground.

VIVEC: AREN'T YOU GETTING A LITTLE OLD FOR THIS, ALI?

ALANDRO SUL: VI THANK GOD! WHAT'S GOING ON?





VIVEC: SOMETHING STRANGE, THAT'S FOR SURE. APOLOGIES FOR THE DELAY, OLD PAL, BUT YOU CAN TURN YOUR SIGNAL WATCH OFF NOW.

SOUND FX: ZZT ZZT ZZT

On VIVEC who's turned around, looking out the alley, his eyes glowing with his APOTHEOVISION. ALANDRO sheepishly clicks his signal watch off.

VIVEC: I WOULD'VE BEEN HERE SOONER, BUT THE MIMEODEMIC HAS SPREAD ALL THE WAY — (concentrating with his hyper-sight) — WELL, LOOKS LIKE ALL THE WAY TO MIDTOWN NOW.

ALANDRO SUL: TWO WEEKS UNTIL I RETIRE FROM THE NEGATZETTE AND THIS COMES UP?

VIVEC and ALANDRO, the former still in concentration.

VIVEC (via mind-link): LEXIE? HOW'S THE POLYPORTAL?

ALMALEXIA (via mind-link): READY WHEN YOU ARE, VIVEC!

VIVEC, floating, turns to ALANDRO, smiling, holding out a Muatra for his friend to hold on to.

VIVEC: ALI, WHAT SAY YOU GO INTO RETIREMENT WITH STYLE?

XIII. Heroes of Tomorrowind

VIVEC and ALANDRO in the alley.

ALANDRO SUL: DON'T GET ANGRY, V, BUT MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL, YOU KNOW

VIVEC and ALANDRO, taking flight.

VIVEC: NEREVAR?

ALANDRO SUL: DUH.

VIVEC and ALANDRO, flying higher.

VIVEC: HA. WHICH **ONE?** GET READY. WE'RE HIGH ENOUGH TO DIVE IN.

[...] [T]he five members of the Pseudo-6th-House (VIVEC, ALMALEXIA, SOTHA SIL, MOLAG BAL, and the UR) and ALANDRO SUL descend in a stable freefall through a monstrous white-hot interdimensional "tunnel" made out of liquid video. The walls of this tunnel look like waterfalls of elongated, gelatinous television screens, alien news channels, monster-filled sitcoms, and mercurial infomercials all stretching past at terminal velocity. ALANDRO looks quite terrified. He's being held stable by his best pal, VIVEC. Most of the super-people all look like they are having fun: VIVEC is grinning, the UR and MOLAG BAL are cracking jokes. SOTHA SIL and ALMALEXIA look stalwart and determined, but otherwise remain unshaken as they fall. This kind of stuff is completely normal to them.



SOTHA SIL: Everyone remember your pop-up blockers! Have your info-virals protex engaged! Lock and load! Almalexia will help us maintain physical and mental coherency!

ALMALEXIA: We're freefalling in pure television foam, team! Ten seconds until the LZ and don't waste one of them looking around or you risk pleasure-center infection!

ALANDRO SUL: HEY, V! IS IT TOO LATE TO CHANGE MY MIND?!?

VIVEC: YOU'RE ABOUT TO DOCUMENT THE PSEUDO-6TH-HOUSE PREVENTING EARTH'S INVASION BY THE INTELLECTIVE'S OWN VIDEOVERSE! TOUGHEN UP!
(beat) HOW'S THE LZ, SIL?

ALANDRO SUL: THE INTELLECTIVE?!?

SOTHA SIL: ALMALEXIA AND I ARE STABILIZING A POCKET REAL, BROTHER! WE'LL HIT EARTH-TYPE GROUND! WE'RE ALSO WORKING ON GETTING THAT TINGLE OUT OF EVERYONE'S HEAD VIA OUR HYPER-AMYGDALAS!



MOLAG BAL: DAGOTH UR, QUIT STARING INTO THE SALES FOAM!

THE UR: BUT EVERYTHING'S ONLY \$19.95!

MOLAG BAL: HEH.

THE UR: "MY GOD, IT'S FULL OF COMMERCIALS!"

MOLAG BAL: HA HA.

[...] [L]iquid video tunnel, [...] VIVEC AND ALANDRO SUL. The UR can be seen in the background.

ALANDRO SUL: BUT WHO'S WATCHING THE CITY, V?

VIVEC: DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROWIND, ALI, I CALLED IN THE NTH-GEN BOTTLEBOT RESERVES TO KEEP THE CITIZENS FROM HURTING EACH OTHER. IT'S ONLY THE INTELLECTIVE. RELAX AND ENJOY THIS. (beat) AND, AS ALWAYS, TRY NOT TO TAKE A PICTURE OF THE UR WHEN HE'S STARING RIGHT AT YOU, OKAY, PAL? WE HAVE ENOUGH ON OUR HANDS WITHOUT HIS SHARMAT SHOWING UP, TOO. LEXIE, SITREP!

ALMALEXIA, *her eyes inky with some kind of negative energy.*

ALMALEXIA: FOUR MORE SECONDS TO LANDFALL! PREPARE FOR A BIT OF DISTORTION AS THE LIQUID VIDEO SPLASHES UP ON ARRIVAL! I'LL USE MY

INCONGRUITECH TO SYNTHESIZE THE WORST OF THE A/V INTO OUR OLFACTORY SENSES!

On MOLAG BAL and the UR, SOTHA SIL sliding through the SALESFOAM in the background.

MOLAG BAL: SNIFF. SO NOW I'M SMELLING PRODUCT PLACEMENT. CUTE, LEXIE.

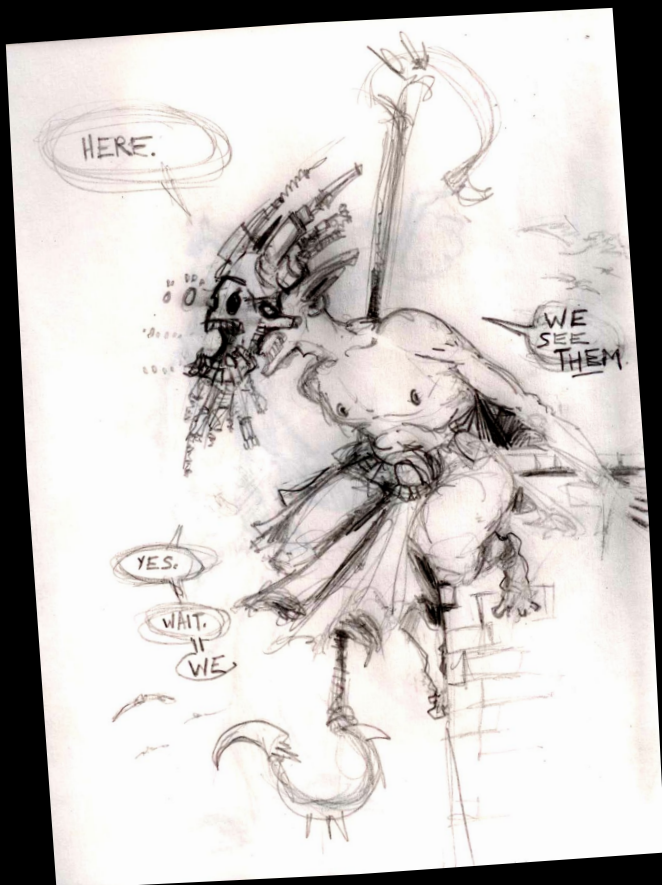
The team, falling through the salesfoam.

THE UR: WAIT, WE'VE GOT INCOMING!

SOTHA SIL: THE UR IS RIGHT! THE INFO-FOAM IS READING ALMALEXIA'S MANIPULATION AND FORMING COUNTER-RESPONSE SEX-AGGRESSION BREAKBEAT HORNET-SHAPED HOMING MISSILES OUT OF COUNTLESS GANGSTA RAP MUSIC VIDEOS! THIS MIGHT GET UGLY!

VIVEC, *still holding* ALANDRO, *addressing the rest of the team.*

VIVEC: NO LOSER TALK! WE'VE STOPPED THALMOR SUPER-SCIENTISTS, HIST PSYCHOPATHS, TAL(OS) MASTERMINDS, AND GIANT PLANET-BREATHING DEMONS, PEOPLE! DON'T TELL ME WE CAN'T FIND A WAY TO BEAT UP TELEVISION!



XIV. They're buying it

[...] THE INTELLECTIVE [...], bionic despot of a parallel reality. His "body" is in two halves: the massive bone-white jelly-mass of his GIGANTIC BRAIN-HEAD being lowered into a hundred-legged servo-walker. His bloated "face" splits into a perpetually maniacal grin, his eyes held open by hooks and wires to survey the cosmic channel surfing that is his home. There are several [gel screens] in the liquid video landscape around The Intellective [and] each screen tuned to a different, hideous entertainment. [This is] supposed to be disorienting. I mean, we are inside an alternate dimension ruled over by a brain-monster from the future.

GEL SCREEN: **Angelic rock stars ride their guitars past a glass tower of disgruntled office workers.**

GEL SCREEN: A manager screams: "What are you people staring at? Get back to work!"

GEL SCREEN: **A rock star retorts from atop his floating guitar: "Get back to work? GET BACK TO ROCK!"**

GEL SCREEN: *A small fly on stage doing a standup comedian routine to an audience of spiders, a story covered by Sardy Sardukar, reporter of the Nth-Gen-Bottlebotley Beat.*

"[Open MANDALA (PEJORATIVE ACCESS), SPIDER EQUIVALENT (INSERT INTO UNCOMFORTABLE SEXIST JOKE) key wording/auto-COMEDY strategy/HUMOR VS. HUNGER]"

GEL SCREEN: Spider audience, asking the same thing: "Eat or Enjoy or Eat or Enjoy?"

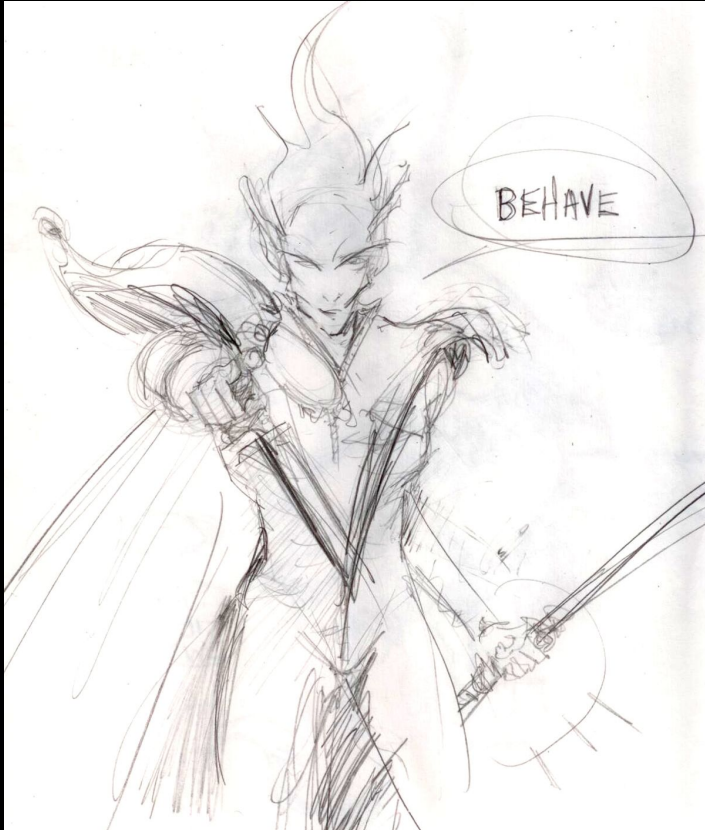
GEL SCREEN: **A LINE OF GOLDEN-SKINNED SEX-ASSASSINS, EYES FLASHING WITH BLUE-SCREEN LIGHT. A SCROLLING VIDEO BLURB FLOATS BENEATH THEM: "TANTRICKSTER SEX ASSASSINS ALL ASK HOW MEGA IS YOUR MOJO IN MYFACE!!!"**

A creeper shot of Arkicide Demonikus, Daedric Fresh Printz of Bad Press looks both Sardy above and VIVEC below, cuz 2 eyes suddenly.

GEL SCREEN: **Vivec, CLOSE UP.**

VIVEC: (on gel screen) ZERO METHOD ZERO, PEOPLE! THE LAST TIME WE LET YAGRUM BAGARN THE INTELLECTIVE SLIP INTO OUR UNIVERSE, HE TRIED TO UPGRADE EVERYONE INTO ONE OF HIS OWN GIGANTIC METADELUSIONS!

Back in the main spread, serpentine Tsaesci in lab coats and goggles oversee the upgrade of The Intellective, their lord and master.



GEL SCREEN: Almalexia,
CLOSE UP.

ALMALEXIA (on gel screen):
AKAVIRI MODEL
CONCEPT-AUTHORING.
FIGURES.

Tsaesci 1: "You like?"

Tsaesci 2: "You like?"

Tsaesci 3: "You like?"

Tsaesci 4: "You like?"

Tsaesci 5: "You like?"

THE INTELLECTIVE: Oh, I don't
know. Can't you JUST make it all
more new?

VIVEC CLOSE UP, separate
gel screen than above, but
same shot.

VIVEC (on gel screen): THIS TIME AROUND, HE'S GOING FOR CONSUMER
CULTURE AT THE CELLULAR LEVEL, WHICH IS ALMOST AS BAD!

ALANDRO SUL: HE'S MAKING ANOTHER NUMIDIUM?!?

VIVEC and ALANDRO.

VIVEC: WORSE, BUDDY. THEY'RE BUYING IT.

XV. Whatever threatens our world

JUBAL in his study.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Needless to say, we did. We bought the whole shebang. Then time stopped making sense. Tomorrowind became that rotoscope deal you might fondly remember. And we ended up living on the moon. Rather, inside it. But I've found a way out. Alandro Sul was my ancestor. The escape route. I have the same confidence he did. It's in my blood.

THE PSEUDO-6th-HOUSE VERSUS THE NUMIDIUM IN THE INTELLECTIVE'S VIDEOVERSE, as photographed and documented by Alandro Sul.

ALANDRO SUL:

OKAY, SO IT WAS WEIRD. BUT THEN, SO WAS EVERYTHING WHEN YOU WERE VIVEC'S BEST BUDDY. IN THE FORTY SOME ODD YEARS THAT I HAD KNOWN HIM, I COULDN'T TELL YOU THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT SPECIES OF WEIRD I'VE SEEN. YOU NAME IT, AND SOME VILLAIN HAD PROBABLY TRIED IT, WORN IT, USED IT, ATE IT, SUBJECTED THEMSELVES OR THE WHOLE WORLD TO IT. AND VIVEC ALWAYS PUT THE WEIRDNESS DOWN. ALWAYS. HELL, I REMEMBER SEEING THE NEWSREELS OF HIM OVER TEARING STUFF UP IN ATMORA WHEN I WAS A LITTLE BOY, OVER AT THE WHIRLING SCHOOL THEATER. THEY'VE SHUT IT DOWN NOW. ONLY HAD ONE SCREEN. A BIG ONE, BIGGER THAN GOD'S FACE IT SEEMED, BUT ONLY ONE SCREEN. THE MULTIPLEXES HAVE TAKEN THOSE KINDS OF THEATERS OVER THESE DAYS. LOOKING AT THE PSEUDO-6TH-HOUSE FIGHT THE ANU-MINIONS OF THE INTELLECTIVE'S ALIENTERTAINMENT, WHERE EVERYTHING WAS A WASH OF MEDIA BLITZ AND NEWS BITES AND VIDEOGAME DYE ALL COME TO LIFE... WELL, I GUESS YOU CAN SEE WHERE I'M GOING WITH THIS. ANYHOW. ANYHOW, I RETIRE IN TWO WEEKS, HAVING BEEN A STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER AT THE TOMORROWIND GAZETTE FOR TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS. I STILL REMEMBER MY FIRST PICTURE OF VIVEC, SAVING A NETCH-ZEPPELIN FROM CRASHING INTO THE PNEUMATIC TUBES ABOVE PULSE PLAZA. IT'S NOT THAT HARD TO REMEMBER, THAT IMAGE. IT'S STILL USED IN THE MAGAZINES WHENEVER THEY DO A NEW BIOPIC OF THE BIG V. YOU'VE PROBABLY SEEN IT. WHO HASN'T?

THE PSEUDO-6th-HOUSE VERSUS THE NUMIDIUM ON TOP OF THE CONTINENT OF TAMRIEL, as photographed and documented by Alandro Sul.

Inset 1: On MOLAG BAL

MOLAG BAL: VIVEC, THE DWEMERI DEVICE, IT'S—

Inset 2: On VIVEC

VIVEC: I SEE IT, BAL! EVERYONE, GO GIANT-FORM!

ALANDRO SUL:

WHAT'S THE WORD? SEMINAL? YEAH. SEMINAL PICTURE, THAT ONE. THEY'RE GONNA WIN THIS FIGHT. THEY'RE GONNA TAKE IT STRAIGHT TO THE INTELLECTIVE'S BIG OL' ROBOT AND SOMEHOW PUNCH EVERYTHING BACK TO NORMAL. ALMALEXIA WILL TALK HER CRAZY TALK TO WHATEVER CONNECTION THE BAD GUY HAS TO OUR UNIVERSE AND IT'LL ALL FALL APART LIKE STRANDS AND EVERYONE ON NIRN WON'T HAVE TELEVISIONS FOR HEADS ANYMORE. MAYBE RIGHT BEFORE THAT, SOME TRICK OF THE INTELLECTIVE WILL SEEM TO TURN THE TIDE, LIKE, I DUNNO, A WHOLE CORPRUS ARMY OF HIST WILL FLOOD OUT OF THE SALESFOAM, BUT THE UR WILL SPLIT HIMSELF INTO A CASCADE OF DIFFERENT HERE AND NOWS AND TAKE CARE OF EVERY ONE OF THEM JUST AS SOTHA SIL STABILIZES THE SCENE WITH A WORD IN A LANGUAGE THAT DOESN'T EXIST YET, BECAUSE HE DOES STUFF LIKE THAT. THEY'RE OUR SUPER-PEOPLE. THEY ALL DO STUFF LIKE THAT. THE IMPOSSIBLE. THEY TAKE WHATEVER WEIRDNESS THAT THREATENS OUR WORLD, WHATEVER THE SCALE, AND SMACK IT BACK INTO SHAPE BY USING WHATEVER IMPOSSIBLE MEANS THEY HAVE INSIDE THEM. AND YOU KNOW WHY I'M SO CONFIDENT? BECAUSE I CAN'T IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE THEIR KIND OF IMPOSSIBLE ... ISN'T.



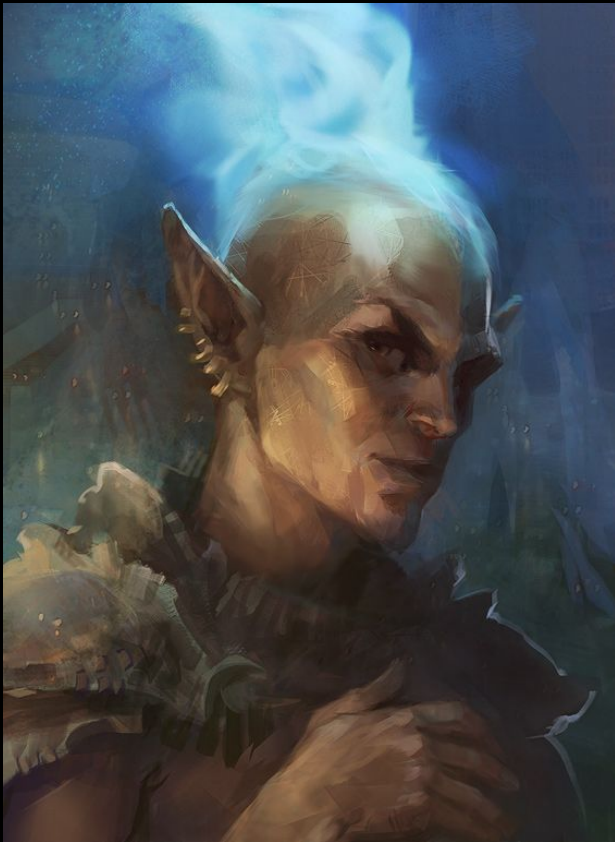
XVI. Jubal and Vivec

Ald Sotha Below
Marketplace 44. Now.
Whirling School Prefect Approved

ALD SOTHA MARKETPLACE 44. "DAY". *Back at the marketplace. JUBAL has finally noticed VIVEC's appearance and he, like most everyone else, is taken aback. He doesn't bow. He's just shocked.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I'm...not supposed to see you yet.

HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. EAST OBSERVATORY. *A golden glow subsides as JUBAL and VIVEC are now in House Sul's tea room. They face one another in the same positions as they were at in the market. JUBAL's no longer shocked, however, he's slightly perturbed.*



VIVEC: Is this better?

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: No! You just teleported both of us away from the marketplace in plain view. People will talk.

VIVEC *stands*. *No more floating lotus position. His spear and shield are likewise removed. JUBAL has turned from him, dealing with some internal conflict.*

VIVEC: I was only trying to help you.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: You're not hearing me. They'll think I'm cheating.

VIVEC: I heard you. Did you hear me?

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: ... Yes. But not in the way I think you mean.

VIVEC *vanishes in a star of golden light*. JUBAL *looks over his shoulder, frowning*.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: You "spoke of this in a previous life" — oh, sure. Just up and vanish. Sometimes? Sometimes, I think you've forgotten all the things you've ever said. I'm going to fix that, too.



HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. "NIGHT". JUBAL *stands on his terrace balcony, overlooking the city below. He's wearing his kimono again. He's had some time to think. [...] He's determined.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Tokbox, come.

The SERVITOR appears. Its death's head visage is small comfort, but it's enough to change JUBAL's expression, which is one of doubt now.

SERVITOR: HERE/ERE/ERE, MUTHSERA/ERA/ERA —



JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I'm sorry, that summoning was rude. There are no castes here, either. What's your name?

SERVITOR: PERMISSION TO BE CONFUSED/USED/USED. DOES MODEL / MAKE / AAD SEMBLIO SECUNDA DELA NALIHHD CARPIO SEMBLEX / SATISFY THE HEAD OF HOUSE SUL? DEAD LANGUAGE, CONTINUED MEANING, STRING-STRAND OF BOTH. MEANING REMAINS: IT'S MY NAME.



JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Then of course it does. I need you to send a demilitarized micro-wasp missile message to Hlaalu Hir. Priority: now. If we still have wax, then use the old seal. The one with the tusk.

XVII. Jubal loses his hands

HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. TEA ROOM. "DAY". JUBAL *still in his kimono, with HLAALU HIR approaching.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Did you bring them all?

HLAALU HIR: I did. Wasn't sure if you were half in the flin but I did it anyway. This cost me a lot.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I know. I'll pay you back.

HLAALU HIR: Sure you will. Got a flask of sujama, if you need it. The sugar-surgeons say it's going to take knives.

JUBAL sits at the great table, his back to the coterie of khajiiti surgeons that start filling the room.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Then it's probably a good thing I got over my fear of needles then, huh?

HLAALU HIR: Jubal. This is ...um, I don't know, but it's ... she's not worth it.

JUBAL has his hands outstretched on a dinner table, a few cat surgeons behind him. Their cat expressions are unreadable.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Sure, she is. We all are. Now hold my hands down. If I fight it —

HLAALU HIR: Fuck that. I told you it cost, and I couldn't sell enough of the Under to get it back. You're doing this.

KHAJIIT SURGEON 1: Muthsera, should it please you, know that we have already perforated your back, neck spine, and ears with our own type of missiles.

JUBAL, seated, is tripping balls, and he looks up. He has moons for irises, one silver, one red.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Say again.

KHAJIIT SURGEON 2: He jests. They're not missiles, they're akin to what you call 'whiskers', only we have to throw them secretly at the patient when they're not looking. Vabrisi, if you must know.

KHAJIIT SURGEON 1: There is a proverb among my people. It goes: "Two moons, two paws, ten claws. Take but one away and you —"

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Dead language, continued meaning: cut them both off.

XVIII. Cosmic bachelor party

Ald Sotha. The Corner Club. After the Operation.

ALD SOTHA. CORNER CLUB. "NIGHT". JUBAL's *bachelor party at the Corner Club. Its regular patrons have been shown the door. Weirder guests have arrived: gods, monsters, gods and monsters. Jubal's hands have been cut off. They are covered in bandages. He ignores the guests, and speaks to his friend.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I don't —

HLAALU HIR: — recognize a lot of these people? Yeah. Turned into a cosmic shindig. Who knew? You ready?

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I'm not sure. Do I look okay?

HLAALU HIR: For someone that just cut your hands off, sure. On the day before you have to take your trial to prove you're worthy of this wedding. Ask me? You'll be fine.

Later.

JUBAL *and* MORIHAUS, *seated together, the latter a winged minotaur. His bull head has a nose ring.*

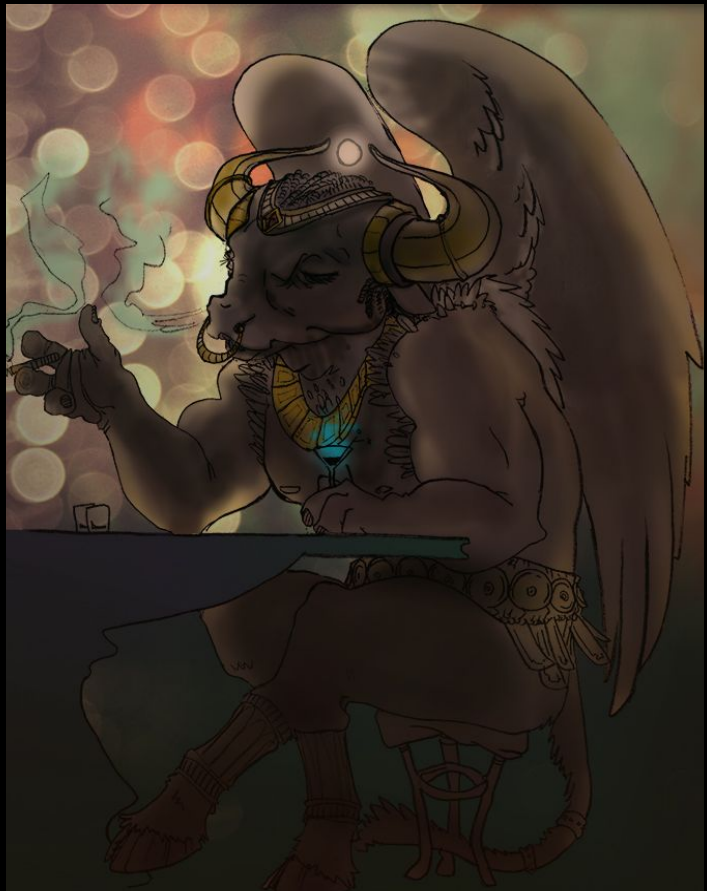
JUBAL-LUN-SUL: The nose ring. I really want to pull on that. Instinct. Sorry, I'm drunk.

MORIHAUS: They all want to pull on it. I mean, goes with the territory.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: You're the sire of the TEM, right?

MORIHAUS: 'Third Empire Men', yes. The 'Thalmor Emissary Masser', no. But then again they no longer exist.

JUBAL *looks at the minotaur, giving half a smile.*



JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Hnh. Timelines got broken. Makes it hard to put the right histories into place. In your version, you helped Men find their freedom, right?

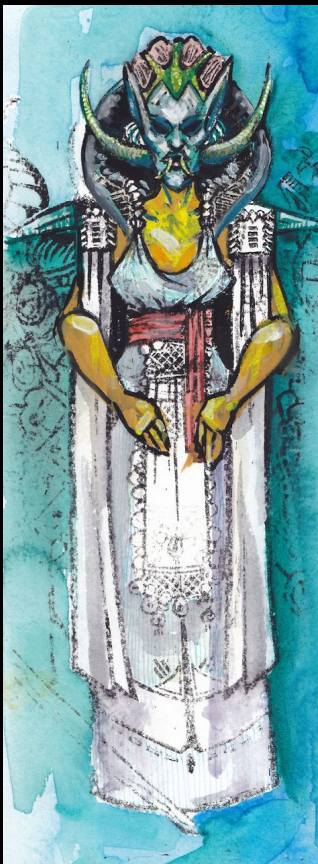
MORIHAUS: No worries. I get it. I had an uncle had the same trouble, sorting out what when was when. Anyway, credit where credit's due. In all honesty, I was a just demigod with a grudge on my shoulder. That whole freedom thing? That was my wife's idea.

Later.

JUBAL sitting at the same table across from a Hist Tree. It's wrapped itself all over its seat, its upper trunk and branches leaning down to not upset the ceiling. Tiny lizards and geckos crawl all over it.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Just a guess, Hist, but I'm betting you don't give a shit. Okay, then listen to me. You're not the Dwemer. I can probably safely say no one knows what you are. But the fact that you sent a fucking tree to my bachelor party says you're listening. I won't forget that.

Later.



JUBAL and ALMALEXIA, the Queen of the old Tribunal. She is slightly translucent but adorned in her ancient armor, tusked-mask and all.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Anyone else seeing you but me, Mercy?

ALMALEXIA: No, Son of Sul.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Good. Then what was he like? Your husband. Nerevar.

ALMALEXIA: Ha. Which one?

JUBAL alone at the table as a man-sized dragon approaches. It has no legs or limbs of any kind, only small and useless wings.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: ... bitch.

AKATOSH: May I sit?

AKATOSH has managed to coil itself around its seat. JUBAL

leans back, drunk off his ass.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Sit. Will sit. Didn't sit. How are you doing, Worm?

AKATOSH: Not well. I failed you.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: You're the god of time. You've always been on the clock. Clock's broken. Are you sure this isn't a self-imposed guilt trip?

AKATOSH: Maybe it is.

JUBAL has a moment of drunken clarity. He leans forward, holding up a bandaged wrist, forgetting for a moment he has no hand to motion with.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Hold on.

AKATOSH: Excuse me?

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I'm not sure, really. But you I think you just said the magic word.

AKATOSH: I know. But, then, TIME IS BROKEN. AND ONLY WE CAN MEND IT. WE WILL ERASE YOU.

JUBAL and AKATOSH stare each other down, as TALOS approaches. The latter is more Viking than Viking. His helmet has curled goat horns that are longer than his arms. His beard has to be wrapped up in his gigantic leather belt. In either hand, he carries a flagon of mead.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL (to AKATOSH): Walk away. You're drinking with the groom on your brother's dead body. Bad mojo, that, in any world. Yours is an empty threat. We're spread too far for erasure now. But you knew that.

AKATOSH: FOLLOWING. THE. BREAK.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: ANIMAL PICTURE, RUDE-WALKER, GO BACK TO THE LAMP THAT STAYS LIT IN WATER AND STORE NO MORE MESSAGES OF USELESS NOISE. WALK AWAY. WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS ALREADY.

TALOS is closer, smiling like Brian Blessed.

TALOS: PROUD RESIDUE, SOON DISPERSED, SERVE NO GUARANTEES MADE IN THOSE MOVIES AND DEMAND NOTHING OF ITS UNDER-SKIN. I AM THE GROOM. WALK AWAY.

AKATOSH vanishes, leaving a greenish vapor. TALOS, still holding the flagons, starts to sit.

TALOS: HO HA HO. Good one!

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: You, too, Tiber. Get back in line.

TALOS backs up, flagons in hand, his chest puffed out in great offense. A Nordic goddess, KYNE, approaches, with a hawk on each arm.

TALOS: Relax, moonboy, this is all just getting to your head. Shake the dragon and what not. That's always a laugh, that. But to dismiss —

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: You mistake me, TAL(OS). Beware yourself.

TALOS: Watch. Your. Tongue.

JUBAL and TALOS stare each other down, KYNE now close to the table, as her hawks fly off-screen.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Wrong response, Dragonborn. Faker. Half-beard. Borrower. VIRUS. NOW GET BACK IN LINE. If you've failed to notice, it's not your party.

JUBAL and KYNE, with TALOS backing away, frowning, still holding his flagons of mead. Priorities.

KYNE: I am the Wife of the Dragon of Time and the Mutant of Space. You, muthsera, are being most unkind to both. I blame the drink.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Stop it, Kyne. You are the mother of rain. Your banner is the Hawk.

KYNE: Wrong. I am the mother of tears. That kind of sadness has no banner.

JUBAL and KYNE, whose head has turned into a hawk.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: It should. We have them for everything else.

KYNE: Do you? Where then is the banner for apology?

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: ...

KYNE: I think you should make it. And, as a wife, I would ask you to start with the manner you called a 'virus'.

Later.

JUBAL and TALOS seated at the table. The flagons the former held are now toppled over before him. These guys are drunk.

TALOS: Women.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: No, it's more. It's marriage.

TALOS: ...I need more mead.

JUBAL and TALOS leave the party, holding each other up.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: You don't. Really, you don't. That's the half-measure we all take to deal with the very idea. Let's just take a walk. There's a tunnel nearby.

TALOS: Hmm/mm/mm. Processing/ing/ing/ing. WHAT IS HAPPENING? I WAS THE MASTER OF THE LAST EMPIRE OF ALL MEN! I WAS THE RED JEWEL OF CONQUEST THAT MADE ALL THINGS RIGHT! WHY DID YOU CALL ME A VIRUS?

XIX. Jubal and Lorkhan

LUNAR LANDSCAPE. JUBAL and TALOS, outside now, in appropriate moonscape outfits. JUBAL has his breather-scarves on. The “outfit” that TALOS wears is particularly impressive: he’s just turned himself into platinum.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Because, one, I’m drunk and I see it now. Two, because you were at one time. You fed off of it. The mastery. And I can’t really blame you. Because the alternative? The alternative means that one of us wins at the expense of the other. Just because.

Behind JUBAL and TALOS. JUBAL points up to the great wash of light that was Nirn.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: See there? That’s where all of us used to live. But not without a price. Dead language, old meaning: The Arena.

TALOS: AURBIS.

JUBAL and TALOS continue to stare at the Wheels of Lull. TALOS, though, is starting to change. The platinum is going grey. The helmet he wears is fading from view.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Correct. Now get this: all of us? In the end, we were just put there to fight. More like, at the start. That’s simplifying things on some level I don’t get.

TALOS: Jubal-lun-Sul, you’re lying.



JUBAL looks over at TALOS, who has become LORKHAN [...] LORKHAN wears only a loincloth with the symbols of eyes stitched into it. His chest gapes open as a jagged hole. From it comes a harsh red glow the color of blood if blood was neon, and he has no heart. It should be plain whatever ripped out that heart did so violently.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Excuse me?

TALOS/LORKHAN: Anyone that cuts off their hands? They already get it. They knew they had the Arena in reach, but they decided to refuse it.

JUBAL watches LORKHAN as the latter holds out his hands to either side. The blood-red hole of his chest grows an eye. A woman’s eye.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Okay, you caught me... Lorkhan. It's just way too familiar and it's way too seductive. You know why? Just saying, you've chased that answer your whole life.

TALOS/LORKHAN: It was...it was the easy way out.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Exactly.

The eye in LORKHAN's chest is replaced again by the glow of neon blood.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I should meditate now. Time's almost up.

TALOS/LORKHAN: And I've got work in the morning.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I'm sorry I called you a virus. You're not. You're a preacher. Good night. Give them all my love.

JUBAL sits down to meditate. LORKHAN begins to draw a circle around him in the red dust of the moon.

TALOS/LORKHAN: You're forgetting something.

XX. Numidium

Above. The Battleground.



JUBAL *meditating in the circle.*

JUBAL *looking up at the NUMIDIUM. The shattered remnants of home beyond it.*



JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Hello.

NUMIDIUM: 

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I guess you know the deal. I kill you now.

NUMIDIUM: 

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: No, really, I do. I'd tell you it was my plan all along, but you don't believe in those, do you?

NUMIDIUM: 

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Plans, I mean. But you will. Would you mind, you know, doing this face to face?

NUMIDIUM: 

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Serial contrarian to the last. Just do it. For both our sakes. I promise no tricks.

Jubal talks as the NUMIDIUM starts to shrink to a proper size.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Thank you. I mean that. The others got it all wrong.

NUMIDIUM: 

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Just get down here, already. That's a good boy.

Jubal talks as the NUMIDIUM continues to shrink.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: In those others I include the ones who made you. The Dwemer. 'The Dwarves'. Whatever.

NUMIDIUM: [redacted]

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Look, you don't have to respond to anything I say if you don't want to, but I already know you know that. So listen for once. Can you do that?

NUMIDIUM: [redacted]

Jubal talks as the NUMIDIUM continues to shrink.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I'll take that as a yes. And I know that any kind of 'yes' makes you do what you do, and that only ends in disaster, so hear me out. I'm going to start with some scripture from my people—

NUMIDIUM: [redacted]

JUBAL and the NUMIDIUM face-to-face.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Whoa now, just listen. I promised no tricks. Can I just —

NUMIDIUM: [redacted]

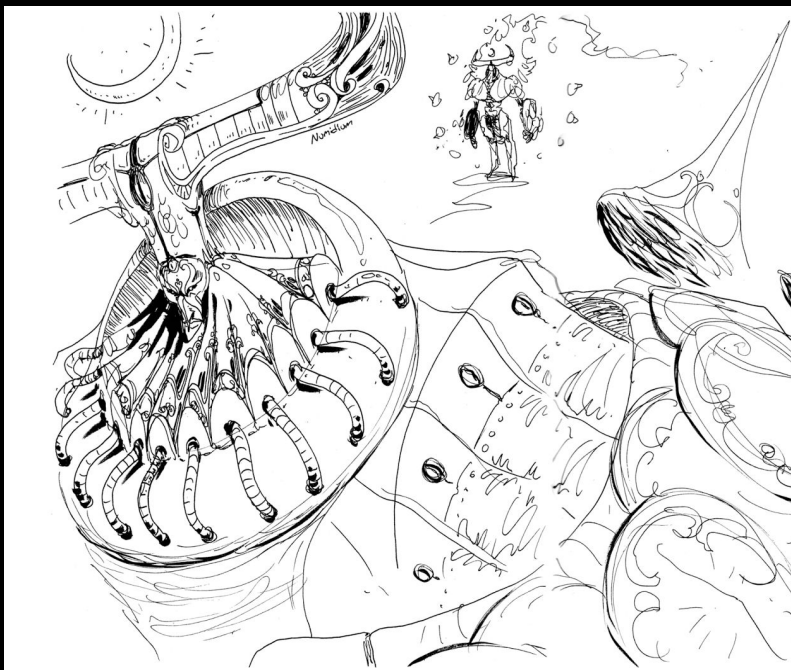
JUBAL-LUN-SUL: — okay, then. After that, I'll end with some words of your people.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: "ACCORDING TO THE CODES OF MEPHALA, THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE THEORIST AND THE TERRORIST. EVEN THE

MOST CHERISHED DESIRE DISAPPEARS IN THEIR HANDS. THIS IS WHY MEPHALA HAS BLACK HANDS. BRING BOTH OF YOURS TO EVERY ARGUMENT —"

NUMIDIUM: [redacted]

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I know. Every other word makes you angry. Wrong word. Every assertion does. But just hear it out.



NUMIDIUM: [REDACTED]

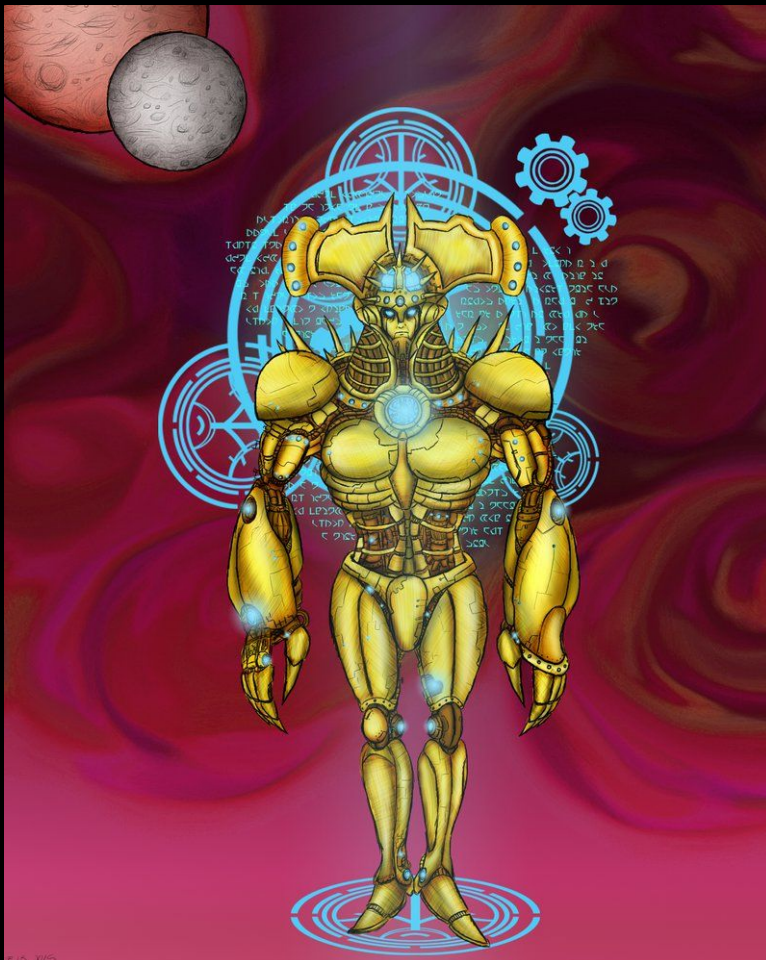
JUBAL-LUN-SUL: "THE ONE-HANDED KING FINDS NO REMEDY. WHEN YOU APPROACH GOD, HOWEVER, CUT BOTH OF THEM OFF. GOD HAS NO NEED OF THEORY AND HE IS ARMORED HEAD TO TOE IN TERROR."

NUMIDIUM: ... [REDACTED]

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: It's literary and portentous. I get that. But the alternative? The words of yours? Those are easy.

JUBAL steps out of the circle.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: "No." ... "No." ... "No." ... "No." ... "No."



JUBAL and the NUMIDIUM face-to-face.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I mean, really, you're just being a brat.

NUMIDIUM: [REDACTED]

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Your philosophy is, for a lack of a better term, the Entitled Teenager. I know you wanted it to be something else. Something more pure, maybe, like Never Underestimate The Little Guy. But that just sucks, too. It gets you nowhere. It got us to this. Everyone ran here to get away from you. To avoid you. Landfall, day one.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: But at some point in time, we all have to grow up. Help me with my scarves. No hands of my own and all.

NUMIDIUM: [REDACTED]

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Do it.

NUMIDIUM *begins to unwrap the scarves, exposing JUBAL's face.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Let's face it. You were made to say "fuck it". That's not an answer that lasts. But, hey look, a lot of us took it to heart. Together, your people and mine, we joined forces, and said "fuck that shit" to the men that invaded our lands. Afterwards? Yeah, we turned on each other, like people do. But we took you. Because, hey, "fuck it, we won, we do what we want."

NUMIDIUM *and JUBAL now truly face-to-face.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Then some other men invaded us. And they weren't kidding around this time. Guess what? The only way we got out of it was to give you to them. Because, hey, "fuck it, they won, they get to do what they want."

JUBAL *walking closer to the NUMIDIUM.*

NUMIDIUM:

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: And the whole time? You were the escape route. You are 'The Disappearance of the Dwarves' —

NUMIDIUM:

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Wasn't that hard to figure out. Mainly because other people did before me. But there was always this one unanswered question, tickling in the back brains.

Here it comes. JUBAL halts, he needs an answer.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: WHY DO YOU KEEP COMING BACK? Red Mountain. Alinor. Reclaiming all the tone-shouts from Atmora that they took from YOU? Stomping— to put it kindly— all of Hammerfell into the ocean to, I don't know, remind its people of their history. And then you chased us here. What is the goddamn point? I mean, really, and I'm really, really asking because no one ever has been, I think, brave enough: do you have some kind of unfinished business?

NUMIDIUM: MAYBE.

JUBAL *and the NUMIDIUM face-to-face. JUBAL is pointing at the NUMIDIUM with an*



arm that has no hand.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Don't you dare do that! That's the magic word and we promised no tricks!

JUBAL and the NUMIDIUM stare each other down.

NUMIDIUM: GREY AREA. GREY MAYBE.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I KNEW IT!

NUMIDIUM: 

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: YOU JUST WANTED TO WIN!

NUMIDIUM: 

NUMIDIUM: YES.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: ...finally. Thank you. And I'm sorry.

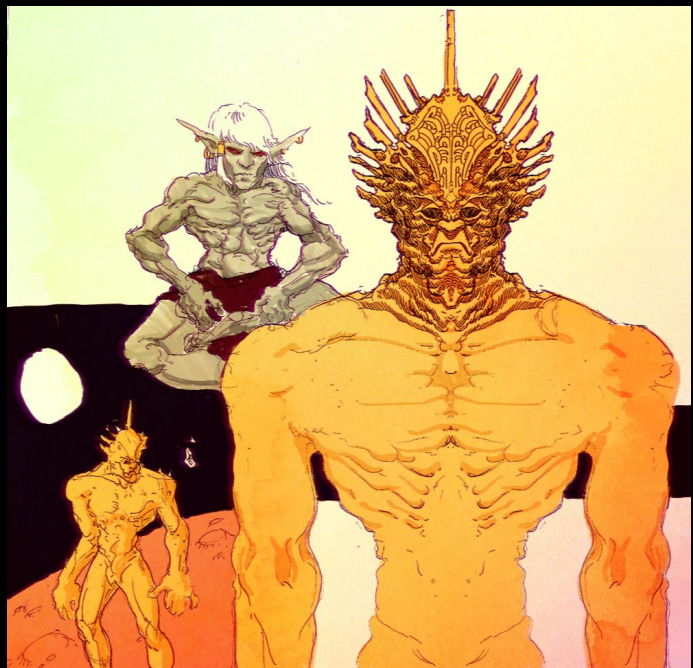
The NUMIDIUM cocks its head. JUBAL almost looks sorry for it.

NUMIDIUM: ?

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Don't you get it? Your people tried to run, but couldn't. My people have to run, and I needed to hear the way out. We're finally talking the same language.

JUBAL *cuts the NUMIDIUM's head off with an* 

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: 



XXI. The Digitals return

The Wheel As IS.

TEM designate: LASTFALL.

JUBAL lies exhausted on top of the decapitated body of the NUMIDIUM. It has no spikes now. It's just a brass body with no head. Five different fingers point at the scene. Ghostly fingers. The Digitals.

DIGITAL FINGER 1: REGISTERED BY CODA.

DIGITAL FINGER 2: NO MORE WHEEL. NO MORE LULL.

DIGITAL FINGER 3: UNION.

DIGITAL FINGER 4: THEN WE SING.

DIGITAL FINGER 5: YES. TONAL ARCHITECTURE SET TO THEME: LOVELETTER:
WEDDING: AMARANTH.



XXII. Dark Elf Ninjas

Ald Sotha. Under-Manor of House Sul.
The Wedding Day.

HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. OBSERVATORY. "DAY". JUBAL *is armored in the brass shell of the NUMIDIUM. His grey long hair is braided. He wears the crest-badge of his house. He has a hawk on one arm and a spear in the other. He is ready.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL:

"The fire is mine: let it consume thee,
And make a secret door at the altar of the Aurbis,
In the House of the Worm, Where we become safe,
And looked after."

Jubal's SERVITOR appears, trying to take no notice of the change in clothes.

SERVITOR: GOOD MORNING, MUTHSERA. BIG DAY. PERMISSION TO CONGRATULATE/ATE/ATE —

The SERVITOR EXPLODES. The room is flooded with assassins from the Morag Tong. They are all masked, and carry varied weapons. All of them sport a Writ badge with Jubal's tusk drawn hastily in blood.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Come forward, House Hlaalu. You told me it would cost.

JUBAL waits as the Tong's assassins surround them. Okay, let's just call them what they are for the rest of this bit: dark elf ninjas. HLAALU is simply wearing his military uniform, the same one he wore when hearing about the marriage. A formality. An important one in this culture.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: The cats would cut off a Dunmer's hands for free. "You think I'm stupid, Hir?"

HLAALU HIR: No.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: So this is where all your money went. The Tong.

HLAALU HIR: Yes. And other insurance policies.

Tight on JUBAL, a micro-wasp missile slowly digging its way into his forehead.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Call it off, Hir. It's hurting me.

HLAALU HIR (O.C.): Me, too.

Tight on HLAALU HIR, three more assassins approaching behind him. Hir's expression is one of duty.

HLAALU HIR: All of this did. It's hurt from the moment we started. I guess from the moment you started. I was there the whole time. I told you this wasn't worth it. I told you to stop. Want to know what hurts the most?

JUBAL pulls the micro-wasp missile from his head with ghost hands that are rendered just like the digital fingers from before.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Hold that thought.

JUBAL throws the missile at a clustered group of the assassins, obliterating them.

SFX: BDOOM!

JUBAL starts to run, lets his hawk fly. It vector strikes more ninjas.

SFX: SQUAAAAAWKK!

JUBAL catapults over the planets of his Orrery, pouncing from one to the other, throwing his spear to kill four, ending with a throat-kick to end a fifth. JUBAL is surrounded but still takes the time to address his old friend. Killing ninjas while he's at it.



JUBAL-LUN-SUL:
Tell me, Hir. I think I know. But, like you, I want to hear it from your own mouth. What hurt the most?

HLAALU HIR: You never told me what she said.

XXIII. Audience with Memory

The Wheel As WAS.

TEM designate: NIRN.

LUNAR LANDSCAPE. *Dunes of red, sugary sand leading as far as the eye can see. JUBAL and HIR stare into the sky. It is a vision of apocalypse. A smaller, silver moon sits to the upper left, orbiting a shattered planet. The planet Nirn. "Earth." Cracked open like an asteroid field still held into spherical shape by forces unknown. The right side of the planet moves from rock and fire to ghostly cosmic clockworks. The planet has a "skeleton" inside it, an interlocking system of gears and pistons and wheels, half-here, half-not, overlaid with a nebula of mathematical equations that we can't understand.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: And I'm supposed to ask it a question?

HLAALU HIR: Yeah, but all private-like. We'll back away. Give you some time.



MEMORY: HELLO. MY NAME IS MEMORY. THANK YOU FOR COMING. FEWER OF YOU DO WITH EACH PASSING YEAR. I GET LONELY.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: ... why?

MEMORY: BECAUSE I'M LEAVING. DON'T TELL THE OTHERS. IF THEY HEAR I AM, THEY'LL COME IN DROVES.

MEMORY: AND I HATE GOODBYES.

XXIV. Hlaalu Hir's end

HOUSE SUL UNDER-MANOR. OBSERVATORY. "DAY". JUBAL *moves faster than we've ever seen, utterly ninja-killing the ninjas. Throat-kicking them all like a stairway, he jumps and grabs a planet from the Orrery.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: My family's name comes from the first child born in the Velothiid, Haeko-dol-Sul, and, like him, we are salt merchants.



JUBAL *throws the planet at a group of ninjas, turning them into a star of blood-red paste.*

SOUND FX: **THOOM!**

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Our crest is the tusk of the bat-tiger.

JUBAL *is making his way closer to HIR. Digital fingers from off-screen are violently pressing the remaining ninjas into the floor.*

SOUND FX: **SKNCH!**

SOUND FX: **THKNCH!**

SOUND FX: **STHPLAT!**

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Our bloodline is registered by C0DA.

JUBAL *has his ghost hands around Hir's throat. Silent panel. JUBAL chokes HIR to death.*

HLAALU HIR: *uhk*

JUBAL *leaving the room.*

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: Goodbye, House Hlaalu, you're dead. And your crest dies with you. It was ugly, anyway. It's always been the crest of compliance. You don't get to know what she said. You would've just bought your way out. But go in peace knowing that she was right. Goodbyes are the worst.

XXV. The High Alma's daughter

THE TEMPLE BELOW. JUBAL is marrying the High Alma's daughter at the Under-Temple of the Velothiid. The whole of Dunmer race is present. And it turns out, the High Alma's daughter is VIVEC. As a woman. The most beautiful woman you can draw. The priest is LORKHAN, his heart-hole exposed.



JUBAL-LUN-SUL: [redacted]

Closer as JUBAL recites his vows. We can kind of see that LORKHAN's heart is perhaps a cage of a dragon. AKATOSH.

LORKHAN: [redacted]

VIVEC recites hers.

VIVEC: [redacted]

[...] LORKHAN's heart-hole isn't a cage at all. Or maybe it is. AKATOSH, Time-Dragon, First Born, begins to eat his tail. The priest address the audience: if there are any here who would object.



LORKHAN: [redacted]

None do. None would.

VIVEC: I —

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: I —

VIVEC: WE.

JUBAL-LUN-SUL: YES.

*The kiss. LORKHAN's hole is no more. It's healed. His heart is secure.
All things are secure.*

XXVI. Amaranth

*THE COSMIC ISSUE — THE FIRST OF THE NU-MEN, A BABY MADE OF FLOWERS —
LOOKING TO THE READER, BUT NOT BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL. IT'S IS
SIMPLY SEEING SOMETHING WE'RE NOT, SOMETHING THAT'S BEHIND US.
"SCROLLING" BEHIND IT IS THE FOLLOWING TEXT:*

My name is Jubal-lun-Sul, of House Sul, whose name is known and heard throughout the Scathing Bay and the Nine times Nine Thrones. Our lord is High Alma Jareon, of House Jareon, whose city is the First City of the New North, where all who Went Under from Landfall settled and made peace with the Worm, when we were not Eighty and One separate peoples but One, carrying the tibrols on our backs together and cutting tunnels by the light and heat that all mer wore, with equal dust in every mouth. My family's name comes from the first child born in the Vellothiid, Haeko-dol-Sul, and, like him, we are salt merchants. Our crest is the tusk of the bat-tiger. Our bloodline is registered by C0DA.

The Digitals say we come from another star, but so many have forgotten. I have not, for my lineage granted me audience with Memory, and I have spoken with the Wheels of Lull. I have seen proof, as any who come Up during Landfall Season, when the winds die down enough Above that all may make pilgrimage under the banner of Vehk and Vehk. Though many Above have renounced Memory, they too remember.

NEW LANGUAGE, CONTINUED MEANING, STRING-STRAND OF BOTH. MEANING REMAINS: WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF WE.



Artist references

[I have done my best to track down a variety of C0DA artworks and the pages of its creators. If you know some interesting C0DA artworks which I forgot to include or prefer to be credited in a different way, please let me know! - Tyermali]

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- p. 26) Alandro Sul
- p. 28) The Ur
- p. 30) Big V ("Behave!")

Darya Makarava (Lady Nerevar). [Site](#) & [Tumblr](#).

- p. 44) Jubal meditating
- p. 27) Almalexia
- p. 28) Bal
- p. 38) Almalexia
- p. 59) Memory

Mikhail Pabor (zhirfrox) [Tumblr](#) & [Deviant Art](#).

- p. 20 - 21) Vivec and Nerevar / Vivec
- p. 4) Velothiid Concept
- p. 55 - 56) Female Vivec Concept / Marriage
- p. 23) TV Heads + Businessmer

Katy Hargrove. [Tumblr](#).

- p. 7) Jubal, Hir and Servitor
- p. 9) Full Comic Page
- p. 12) "Jubal is always dreaming big"
- p. 13) Various Numidium concepts
- p. 16 / p. 47) Digital Fingers [inversed colors for effect]
- p. 42) Lorkhan concept
- p. 44) Numidium & beautiful woman
- p. 46) Spiky Numidium
- p. 53) Hlaalu Hir [color edited]

Ksenia Mamaeva (SnowSkaid). [Deviant Art](#).

- p. -) Cover, based on earliest MW Concept Art
- p. 10) Jubal Vivec staring into the sky
- p. 18) Vivec in his full glory

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- p. 23) Pulse Plaza. [\[Description\]](#)

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- p. 4) Velothiid

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- p. 51) Morag Tong

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- p. 53) Glimpse of Memory

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- p. 49) Doodle of Numidium. [[Thread](#) & [Thread](#)]

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- p. 48) Numidium

